

Jesse O. McClain Store  
Lincoln Street  
Robertsdale  
Huntingdon County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5561

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
Jesse O. McClain Store

HABS No. PA-5561

Location: Lincoln Street, Robertsdale, Huntingdon County, Pa.

History and Description: Jesse O. McClain, a farmer from nearby New Grenada, ran the Rockhill Iron and Coal Company store (HABS No. PA-5554) for a time in the early 1900s. A 1908 map (in county deed books) shows that McClain owned a large house, dated 1904, next to the company store. According to Jesse's grandson, Leslie McClain, this house was originally the grange hall in the village of Waterfall; Jesse had it moved to Robertsdale and reconstructed. Following a dispute with the coal company, the senior McClain built and opened his own store on Lincoln Street. Though similar in form--a long, gable-roofed structure with gable-end porch and a side ell--this building is frame. Tax records list him as owning it between 1911 and 1923. Jesse McClain's son, Norman, took over operation of the store around 1924, and the next year the Rockhill company offered him a lease on the company store. McClain signed the contract in November 1925. In previous years the company store was operated by the Miner's and Farmer's Supply Company. Under the new agreement, McClain operated the company store at Woodvale in addition to the one at Robertsdale.

Jesse O. McClain earned the designation of a "captain of industry in this section," as he operated both company stores for a number of years, and employed many persons in the community. Leslie McClain worked there as a young man and gradually took over the business from his father. In the late 1920s, he began managing the Robertsdale store, and in 1939 he took over the lease agreement with the company. Leslie McClain operated the Robertsdale company store until 1958, shortly after the mines closed and the community fell into economic decline. While the old stone store in Robertsdale has fallen into disrepair, it still stands as one of the most architecturally and historically significant buildings in the community.

Project Information and Sources: This report was part of a larger project to document the Rockhill Iron and Coal Company towns of Robertsdale and Woodvale in Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP). For an overview history of the towns that provides the significance and context for this building as well as a comprehensive list of sources see HABS Nos. PA-5553, PA-54854, and PA-5485. See also additional HABS reports on buildings in each town.

Project historian Lola Bennett completed the research and writing for this project during summer 1989 under the direction of Alison K. Hoagland, senior HABS historian. Bennett's work was published as The Company Towns of the Rockhill Iron and Coal Company: Robertsdale and Woodvale, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1990). Illustrations in the publication include 35mm photographs taken by Bennett; large-format photographs taken by HAER photographer Jet Lowe; and historic photographs from the collections of Thomas L. Matthews, Kenneth Morgan, Ron Morgan, and the Huntingdon County Historical Society. The publication was compiled and edited by HABS historians Kim E. Wallace and Sara Amy Leach. Contemporary 35mm and historic photographs used in the publication as well as other miscellaneous research materials were transmitted to the AIHP collection at Stapleton Library, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, Pa.